

Selected

Parable of the Water Tank.

In Edward Bellamy's new book, "Equality," we find the following parable, which is well worthy of reproduction here :

"There was a certain very dry land, the people whereof were in sore need of water. And they did nothing but to seek after water from morning until night, and many perished because they could not find it.

Howbeit, there were certain men in that land who were more crafty and diligent than the rest, and these had gathered stores of water where others could find none, and the name of these men was called capitalists. And it came to pass that the people of the land came unto the capitalists and prayed them that they would give them of the water they had gathered that they might drink, for their need was sore. But the capitalists answered them and said:

"Go to, ye silly people! why should we give you of the water which we have gathered, for then we should become even as ye are, and perish with you? But behold what we will do to you. Be ye our servants and ye shall have water."

And the people said, "Only give us to drink and we will be your servants, we and our children." And it was so.

Now, the capitalists were men of understanding, and wise in their generation. They ordered the people who were their servants in bands with captains and officers, and some they put at the springs to dip, and others did they make to carry the water, and others did they cause to seek for new springs. And all the water was brought together in one place, and there did the capitalists make a great tank for to hold it, and the tank was called the Market, for it was there that the people, even the servants of the capitalists, came to get water. And the capitalists said unto the people :

"For every bucket of water that ye bring to us, that we may pour it into the tank,

which is in the Market, behold! we will give you a penny, but for every bucket that we shall draw forth to give unto you that ye may drink of it, ye and your wives and your children, ye shall give to us two pennies, and the difference shall be our profit. seeing that if it were not for this profit we should not do this thing for you, but ye should all perish."

And it was good in the people's eyes, for they were dull of understanding, and they diligently brought water to the tank for many days, and for every bucket which they did bring the capitalists gave them every man a penny; but for every bucket that the capitalists drew forth from the tank to give again unto the people, behold! the people rendered to the capitalists two pennies.

And after many days the water tank, which was the Market, overflowed at the top, seeing that for every bucket the people poured in they received only so much as would buy again half of a bucket. And because of the excess that was left of every bucket did the tank overflow, for the people were many, but the capitalists were few, and could drink no more than others. Therefore did the tank overflow.

And when the capitalists saw that the water overflowed, they said to the people: "See ye not the tank, which is in the Market, doth overflow? Sit ye down, therefore, and be patient, for ye shall bring us no more water till the tank be empty."

But when the people no more received the pennies of the capitalists for the water they brought, they could buy no more water from the capitalists, having naught wherewith to buy. And when the capitalists saw that they had no more profit because no man bought water of them, they were troubled. And they sent forth men in the highways, the byways and the hedges, crying: "If any thirst let him come to the tank and buy water of us, for it doth overflow." For they said among themselves,

"Behold! the times are dull; we must advertise."

But the people answered, saying: "How can we buy unless you hire us, for how else shall we have wherewithal to buy? Hire us, therefore, as before, and we will gladly buy water, for we thirst, and ye will have no need to advertise." But the capitalist said to the people: "Shall we hire you to bring water, when the tank, which is in the Market, doth already overflow? Buy ye, therefore, first, water, and when the tank is empty, through your buying, we will hire you again." And so it was because the capitalists hired them no more to bring water that the people could not buy the water they had brought already, the capitalists no more hired them to bring water. And the saying went abroad: "It is a crisis."

And when the capitalists saw yet again that neither the words of the soothsayers, nor of the holy men who were false priests, nor yet for the drops that were called charity, would the people be still, but raged the more, and crowded upon the tank as if they would take it by force, then they took counsel together, and sent men privily forth among the people. And these men sought out the mightiest among the people and all who had skill in war, and took them apart and spake craftily with them, saying:

"Come, now, why cast ye not your lot in with the capitalists? If ye will be their men and serve them against the people, that they break not in upon the tank, then shall ye have abundance of water, that ye perish not, ye and your children."

And the mighty men and they who were skilled in war harkened unto this speech and suffered themselves to be persuaded, for their thirst constrained them, and they then went within unto the capitalists and became their men, and staves and swords were put in their hands and they became a defense unto the capitalists and smote the people when they thronged upon the tank.

And after many days the water was low in the tank, for the capitalists did make fountains and fishponds of the water thereof, and did bathe therein, they and their wives and their children, and did waste the water for their pleasure.

And when the capitalists saw that the tank was empty, they said: "The crisis is

ended;" and they sent forth and hired the people that they should bring water to fill it again. And for the water that the people brought to the tank they received for every bucket a penny, but for the water the capitalists drew forth from the tank to give again to the people they received two pennies, that they might have their profit. And after a time did the tank again overflow even as before.

And now, when many times the people had filled the tank until it overflowed, and had thirsted till the water therein had been wasted by the capitalists, it came to pass that there arose in the land certain men called agitators, for that they did stir up the people. And they spake to the people, saying that they should associate, and then would they have no need to be servants of the capitalists and should thirst no more for water. And in the eyes of the capitalists were the agitators pestilent fellows, and they would fain have crucified them, but durst not for fear of the people.

And the words of the agitators which they spake to the people were on this wise:

"Ye foolish people, how long wilt ye be deceived by a lie and believe to your hurt that which is not? for behold! all these things that have been said unto you by the capitalists and by the soothsayers are cunningly devised fables. And likewise the holy men, who say that it is the will of God that ye should always be poor and miserable and athirst, behold! they do blaspheme God and are liars, whom he will bitterly judge though he forgive all others. How cometh it that ye may not come by the water in the tank? Is it not because ye have no money? And why have ye no money? Is it not because ye receive but one penny for every bucket that ye bring to the tank, which is the Market, but must render two pennies for every bucket ye take out, so that the capitalists may have their profit? See ye not how by this means the tank must overflow, being filled by that ye lack and made to abound out of your emptiness? See ye not also that the harder ye toil and the more diligently ye seek and bring the water, the worse and not the better it shall be for you by reason of the profit, and that forever?"

After this manner spake the agitators for many days unto the people, and none heeded them, but it was so that after a time the

people hearkened. And they answered and said unto the agitators:

"Ye say truth. It is because of the capitalists and of their profits that we want, seeing that by reason of them and their profits we may by no means come to the fruit of our labor, so that our labor is in vain, and the more we toil to fill the tank the sooner doth it overflow, and may receive nothing because there is too much, according to the words of the soothsayers. But behold, the capitalists are hard men, and their tender mercies are cruel. Tell us if ye know any way whereby we may deliver ourselves out of our bondage unto them. But if ye know of no certain way of deliverance we beseech you to hold your peace and let us alone, that we may forget our misery."

And the agitators answered and said:

"We know a way."

And the people said:

"Deceive us not, for this thing hath been from the beginning, and none hath found a way of deliverance until now, though many have sought it carefully with tears. But if ye know a way, speak unto us quickly."

Then the agitators spake unto the people of the way. And they said.

"Behold! what need have ye at all of these capitalists, that ye should yield them profits upon your labor? What great things do they wherefore ye render them this tribute? Lo! it is only because they do order you in bands and lead you out and in, and set your tasks and afterward give you a little of the water yourselves have brought and not they. Now, behold the way out of this bondage! Do ye for yourselves that which is done by the capitalists—namely, the ordering of your labor, and the marshaling of your bands and the dividing of your tasks. So shall ye have no need at all of the capitalists and no more yield to them any profit, but all the fruit of your labor shall ye share as brethren, every one having the same; and so shall the tank never overflow until every man is full and would not wag the tongue for more, and afterwards shall ye with the overflow make pleasant fountains and fish ponds to delight yourselves withal even as did the capitalists; but these shall be for the delight of all."

And the people answered, "How shall we go about to do this thing, for it seemeth good to us?"

And the agitators answered, "Choose ye discreet men to go in and out before you and to marshal your bands and order your labor, and these men shall be as the capitalists were; but, behold, they shall not be your masters as the capitalists are, but your brethren and officers who do your will, and they shall not take any profits, but every man his share like the others, that there may be no more masters and servants among you, but brethren only. And from time to time as ye see fit, ye shall choose other discreet men in place of the first to order the labor."

And the people hearkened, and the thing was very good to them. Likewise seemed it not a hard thing. And with one voice they cried out, "So let it be as ye have said, for we will do it."

And the capitalists heard the noise of the shouting and what the people said, and the soothsayers heard it also, and likewise the false priests and the mighty men of war, who were a defense unto the capitalists; and when they heard they trembled exceedingly, so that their knees smote together, and they said to one another, "It is the end of us!"

Howbeit, there were certain true priests of the living God, who would not prophesy for the capitalists, but had compassion on the people; and when they heard the shouting of the people and what they said, they rejoiced with an exceeding great joy, and they gave thanks to God because of the deliverance.

And the people went and did all the things that were told them of the agitators to do. And it came to pass as the agitators had said, even according to all their words. And there was no more any thirst in that land, neither any that was ahungered, nor naked, nor cold, nor in any manner of want; and every man said unto his fellow, "My brother," and every woman said unto her companion, "My sister," for so were they with one another as brethren and sisters which do dwell together in unity. And the blessing of God rested upon that land forever.